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Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

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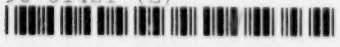

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/87, A/51/208-S/1996/543, A/51/210, A/51/267; A/C.3/51/4)

1. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that social disintegration, poverty, hunger, unemployment, crime and the unfavourable international economic environment continued to retard social development. There was need for a renewed commitment at both the national and international levels to tackle social problems. His country sought to promote social development through poverty eradication, job creation and human resources development. Its development programmes were designed to meet the basic needs of the population and promote self-reliance. A major share of Bangladesh's development budget was allocated to the social sector, with the highest priority given to education, health and population control.

2. His country's social development strategies included special programmes for enhancing the status of women, children, youth, the disabled, the elderly and minorities. Full participation by minorities and other marginalized groups remained a priority. In that regard, mention should be made of the active involvement of the civil society and non-governmental organizations. Bangladesh supported the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which would require a firm commitment by Governments and the international community at the national, regional and international levels. His delegation would appreciate information on programmes being undertaken by United Nations agencies to support the efforts of Governments to implement the World Programme.

3. His country's national youth policy set forth programmes to promote the participation of youth in education, skills development, employment and community-development activities. Special emphasis had been placed on ensuring the active participation of girls and young women. The equalization of opportunities for disabled persons was essential. In spite of its lack of resources, Bangladesh had special assistance programmes for people with disabilities. His Government fully supported the statement made by Costa Rica at the previous meeting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the question of ageing, and remained committed to the International Plan of Action on Ageing. It had adopted national plans to ensure observance of the rights of the elderly and welcomed the programme for observing the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

4. Turning to the role of cooperatives, outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/267), he said that Bangladesh had a well-developed cooperative movement in the spheres of rural development, poverty eradication, and empowerment of poor and disadvantaged women and persons without assets. The potential of cooperatives should be utilized in attaining social development goals and there should be increased participation at the regional and international levels. There was a need for greater coordination in the field of social development between the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the

international financial institutions. United Nations programmes should be strengthened in order to play a catalytic role in social development at the national level. The Economic and Social Council should play a more pro-active role in harnessing the resources available to the functional commissions. Lastly, the Commission for Social Development should be further strengthened to enable it to monitor the achievement of social development goals.

5. Mr. ADAWA (Kenya) said that his country attached great importance to eradicating poverty, expanding productive employment, and promoting social integration, the advancement of women and respect for human rights. National and international action should give priority to eliminating the obstacles to development, promoting employment and creating a favourable international economic and social environment. His Government's first priority was to maintain a stable macroeconomic framework, while continuing structural reforms to accelerate economic growth. Far-reaching adjustment policies had been put into place to support growth and integrate social sectors, benefiting the poor and other vulnerable groups, such as youth and women. Current programmes encompassed welfare and basic services, skills development, employment and job creation, rural development and environmental conservation.

6. Kenya's welfare and basic services programmes included immunization and the provision of essential drugs to health centres, and nutrition-support programmes for children under five years and for expectant and lactating mothers. His Government had launched national programmes to provide income support, promote self-employment and develop small enterprises through skills upgrading, access to electricity and water, and marketing. Kenya had given priority to education and health and actively pursued a population control policy.

7. The cooperative movement had played an important role in raising living standards. His Government had strengthened the capacity of cooperatives for setting up sustainable enterprises to create employment and generate income. Kenya supported the World Programme of Action for Youth and had set up programmes to implement the priorities identified in the Programme. The international donor community and non-governmental organizations should provide financial support for the Programme. Kenya had also taken measures for the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 50/144, annex), and was grateful for the generous assistance provided for its vocational and rehabilitation programmes.

8. Mrs. MARTINEZ (Ecuador) said that her Government, in its efforts to promote social development, had signed important multilateral and bilateral agreements for exchanging information on problems relating to youth, older persons, the disabled and the family. The right to development, including social development, was a universal human right. Both developed and developing countries must assume the responsibility to foster social development. Her Government had established programmes to assist the most vulnerable sectors of society and had enacted legislation specifically designed to protect their rights.

9. Her country's plan of action on gerontology included guidelines from the International Plan of Action on Ageing and provided for the participation of

State, municipal and private bodies. With regard to disabled persons, the National Council for the Disabled sought to coordinate all efforts by public and private institutions to provide training and counselling. The National Bureau for Youth coordinated activities by private and public organizations relating to the problems encountered by young people. Lastly, she stressed that that important effort must be supported by the competent international agencies.

10. Mr. HUIJSMANS (Netherlands), speaking as his country's youth representative, said that the United Nations tended to portray young people in a one-sided manner as homemakers and builders of families. But young people were politically committed; they were capable of assuming responsibilities and shaping their own lives. With their energy and vision, they could make a long-term contribution to world peace. The United Nations should offer opportunities to the young and enable them to play a full role in the life of society. A charter on the rights of youth was necessary in order to give young people a voice and empower them through personal responsibility.

11. There were situations where the rights of young people were continuously violated. In many developing countries, particularly in Asia, those in authority placed greater emphasis on economic development than on the development of democracy. Over the years, young people and students had played a significant role in the pro-democracy movements in Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, China, Myanmar and, most recently, Indonesia. In some of those countries, students had been prohibited from dealing with political or social questions. If they demonstrated in public, they ran the risk of arrest and interrogation with the use of intimidation and violence. Those were flagrant violations of the basic right of young people to concern themselves with important social issues, such as improving the situation of landless peasants and workers. The authorities concerned should enter into dialogue with the various groups in their societies, particularly students.

12. The conscription of children for armed conflicts was shocking. The United Nations should take immediate measures to ban the recruitment of children and to demobilize child soldiers, helping them to resume their education and lead normal lives. A working group was elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to raise the minimum age at which children might become involved in armed conflicts and for voluntary recruitment in the armed services. He hoped that the draft protocol would be adopted and implemented as speedily as possible and that stricter rules would prohibit the use of child soldiers.

13. The United Nations should view young people as active participants in solving problems, not just as victims. Member States could be instrumental in that regard by guaranteeing the rights of young people and providing them with greater opportunities. The Organization could increase the number of young trainees in United Nations agencies and could target development aid for projects run for and by young people.

14. Mrs. GITTENS-JOSEPH (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the 13 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that were members of the United Nations, said that in spite of progress made in recent years, profound social problems continued to exist. That challenge must be met in a

comprehensive manner in order to mitigate the problems that threatened to disintegrate the social fabric. In the Caribbean region, much was being done to promote family life and support the family as the basic social unit. Preventive and remedial programmes had been introduced to meet the needs of the family, emphasizing the responsibilities of individual family members, the important role of parents, the need to balance work and family commitments, the protection and development of children, and counselling and support services. Family courts had become a reality in some countries and a family code for the region was expected to be finalized soon.

15. Since there were many female-headed families in the Caribbean region, the empowerment of women in the economic, social and political spheres was particularly important. Efforts were being made to lay down a regional policy on gender equality and social justice. Improving the economic position of women was especially important in that regard. The neglect and exploitation of children and the growing phenomenon of street children caused grave concern. Initiatives are under way to address the problem of street children by providing counselling and reuniting children with their families. The Caribbean Community had initiated a series of youth consultations, with the emphasis on participation by young people, in order to develop a regional youth policy and plan of action. The World Programme of Action for Youth would be useful for Caribbean countries as they tackled the problems affecting youth in the region. Measures were being taken to deal with anti-social behaviour by young people and reduce the high level of youth unemployment.

16. Many CARICOM member States intended to participate fully in the International Year of Older Persons by undertaking projects that would benefit the elderly. Many Caribbean countries were formulating national policies to involve senior citizens in national development and integrate them into society. There were various programmes throughout the region to expand opportunities for the elderly and improve their situation through social welfare and public health reforms. Governments and non-governmental organizations cooperated to provide social services, counselling, recreational activities and medical care. Family and community support was encouraged. The CARICOM member States were also taking steps to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, in order to improve the situation of people with disabilities. Some countries had introduced financial assistance for the disabled, such as monthly disability assistance grants to needy persons unable to earn an adequate income.

17. The cooperative movement in the Caribbean region was a vibrant economic institution. Cooperatives served as a catalyst in addressing critical needs and had assisted in developing an entrepreneurial culture, especially among disadvantaged groups. Some countries were carrying out national policies for cooperatives to make the sector more sustainable and integrate it with other economic and social sectors. Initiatives were under way to amend legislation to promote cooperative programmes oriented towards job creation, productivity, foreign exchange earnings and savings, and education relating to cooperatives.

18. Mrs. BENNANI-AKHAMLICH (Morocco) noted that the series of world conferences organized by the United Nations in the 1990s had drawn attention to problems affecting children, women, the environment, population, employment, education, health, nutrition and habitat. The success of the programmes of action adopted

at those conferences rested on the political will of national leaders to fulfil their commitments to the developing countries. Improved utilization of development resources continued to be a key issue. Development goals must be fully implemented by Governments in collaboration with the United Nations system, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and the international community. Development cooperation must be set up between developed and developing countries for those goals to be attained. International assistance was vital to support the efforts of the developing countries, particularly African and least developed countries. Assistance provided by developed countries would be beneficial to the donor countries themselves and would contribute to the socio-economic development of the entire world.

19. A country's ability to satisfy the needs of its population rested upon political stability, positive social indicators, economic competition and scientific and technological progress. Her delegation welcomed the recent adoption by the Economic and Social Council of a resolution increasing the membership of the Commission for Social Development and annualizing its sessions, and hoped that sufficient resources would be provided for the work of the Commission. Taking account of the major contribution made to social development by the cooperative movement, the United Nations should help cooperatives in developing countries by providing all-round assistance.

20. In 1992 the Moroccan people had voted to amend the Constitution, in order to give priority to the well-being of its citizens. An economic and social council had been created to implement the constitutional provision that all Moroccan citizens had the right to education and employment. Owing to economic difficulties, Morocco had been obliged to adopt a restructuring policy in 1983. Although economic growth over the past 10 years had produced positive effects, it had not benefited the whole population. The Government had therefore adopted a national social plan which would be especially beneficial to people in rural areas, and comprised measures for health care, education, electrification, drinking water, sanitation and housing. Particular emphasis was being placed on the protection of the family, which was the natural environment for the well-being of all members of society. Programmes had been created for the integration of women, the education of girl children, and the protection of young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Encouraging results had also been achieved in the area of family planning.

21. Her delegation hoped that the Secretary-General's special initiative for Africa would mobilize the entire international community to contribute as generously as possible to economic and social recovery in Africa.

22. Mr. DONOKUSUMO (Indonesia) said that the Secretary-General's report on cooperatives (A/51/267) underlined their importance in providing economic opportunities to the less advantaged and in alleviating poverty. However, more information concerning the impact on cooperatives of the overall world economic situation would have made the report more comprehensive.

23. Indonesia had long supported the use of cooperatives as a means of empowering the poor and providing them with a vehicle to contribute to national development as well as to enhance their individual situations. As part of the

follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, due consideration should be given to supporting the role of cooperatives. Governments, international financial institutions and other international organizations should further promote policies enabling small enterprises, cooperatives and other forms of micro-enterprises to develop their capacities for income generation and employment creation.

24. Indonesia had made considerable efforts to improve the management of its cooperatives and to promote them as viable institutions. Education and training were being provided to their members in order to enhance their professionalism and give them the essential managerial and marketing skills. By 1994, there had been a total cooperative membership in Indonesia of nearly 25 million people. The Government would continue to extend the necessary support to cooperatives, which were considered to be a central mechanism for national development. The President of Indonesia had recently said that small businesses and cooperatives could participate in national development through strategic partnerships with large companies, and had called for better cooperation between farmers and private companies to develop industries that could add value to agricultural products. The objective was to improve the management of agro-industries, diversify food products and increase their competitiveness.

25. He reiterated his Government's support for the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, and its determination to work at all levels towards its full implementation.

26. Mr. REZVANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, despite substantial global economic and social progress, much suffering still prevailed in different parts of the world. More than 1.3 billion people lived in poverty and unacceptable conditions. Although the gap between rich and poor countries persistently widened, they faced common problems such as high rates of unemployment and social disintegration. Compounding such problems were threats to global integration, peace and security, crime, violence, conflict and war. Much remained to be done to improve the quality of life for a large number of people in the world.

27. The past few years had seen international efforts to redefine social development concepts as well as social and economic strategies; at the World Summit for Social Development, issues such as poverty eradication, productive employment and social integration had been addressed, and participants had committed themselves to accord the highest priority to the promotion of social progress worldwide. That entailed achieving justice and betterment of the human condition in an environment conducive to participation by all. The World Summit had explored innovative sources of financing, but there had been no concrete action so far. The fulfilment of that task and of the other Summit goals required political will, a favourable international atmosphere and access to adequate resources and opportunities, particularly at the international level.

28. National efforts and resources alone would not suffice. Such challenges called for an enabling international environment and financial support. Prescriptions for national social integration should be equally applied at the international level. Each State should have an equitable share in shaping the international economic, social and political order. There was a need to forge

international relations in which might and wealth did not generate rights and in which international law was fully observed. The coercive economic measures adopted by certain States against developing countries were inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations and the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. Such measures impeded social development in developing countries. Promotion of respect for the rule of law by all States, big and small, would serve the interest of the international community as a whole.

29. His Government's national development strategies and programmes were being given a people-centred approach. Quality of life was a new focus of concern, and a large portion of total public expenditure had been allocated to social development and poverty alleviation, producing beneficial effects on social indicators.

30. Empowering the young with knowledge and resources, as well as meeting their basic human needs, should be primary goals of national development. As their individual development and social contribution would shape the future of the world, investment in youth-related issues was the foundation for national development. The Islamic Republic of Iran was embarking upon a wide range of initiatives, such as the establishment of local youth commissions and the allocation of appropriate funds.

31. Disabled persons had the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. They should receive the support they needed within the ordinary structures of education, health, employment, vocational training, and rehabilitation and welfare services. They had the right to enjoy economic and social security, and the same civil and political rights as other human beings. A government department had been established to coordinate medical and social services and to ensure the availability of jobs for persons with disabilities.

32. The strength and continuation of growth in societies depended on the existence of healthy family patterns. The family should receive adequate protection and support; its malfunction could be considered as the malfunction of society as a whole.

33. The problem of ageing faced all societies. By the year 2025, older persons would constitute 14 per cent of the global population, and new policies and considerable resources would be necessary in order to deal with their special needs. The proclamation of the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons was a good opportunity for Member States to focus on issues concerning the elderly, in order to better identify the means to promote the quality of their life throughout the world.

34. Mr. WILMOT (Ghana) welcomed the statement made at the Committee's previous meeting by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. His delegation was convinced that the Committee's efforts as part of the intergovernmental process would reinforce national implementation goals. The current discussion of social development helped to focus the international community's attention on specific social groups which, because of their circumstances, deserved particular care. The importance of the family as the basic unit of society had also received due attention. He hoped that Member States would work to fully implement action programmes on youth, older persons

and persons with disabilities. Success in those areas would contribute immensely to achieving the goal of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition.

35. The adoption of a number of decisions on the mandate, terms of reference and working methods of the Commission for Social Development, and of a new work programme to the year 2000 was an affirmation that the international community was ready to address the underlying causes of the profound problems affecting the world social situation, in order to eliminate distress and insecurity in the lives of all peoples.

36. More than a year after the World Summit for Social Development, the world social situation had changed little. To the problems caused by poverty could be added crime, drugs and ethnic strife, which had acquired global characteristics. Their ramifications required not only national action, but also action by the United Nations system with its capacity for cross-sectoral initiatives combining the mandates and specializations of its various agencies, funds and programmes. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Commission for Social Development, as approved by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1996/7, to tackle the special situation of Africa and the least developed countries, the enhancement of social development goals in structural adjustment programmes, and the mobilization of domestic and international resources for social development. The Secretary-General's report on cooperatives (A/51/267) was an important contribution to the principles and objectives of the World Summit.

37. The cooperative sector in Ghana enjoyed strong governmental support. It afforded an effective means for economic empowerment to those who otherwise would have no avenue for productive living. It was increasingly being used at the local level as a means whereby communities could make available appropriate and affordable basic services, thereby contributing to the fight against poverty, unemployment and social disintegration.

38. The international community must ensure that measures to foster social development yielded the expected results. In addition to the special needs of the young, the aged and disabled, and the family unit, attention must be paid to emerging issues and trends affecting social development as a whole. An integrated approach to social development would be the most effective means of dealing with the myriad problems that characterized the world social situation.

39. Ms. JIANG Qin (China) said that the question of youth, ageing and persons with disabilities occupied a very important place in the field of social development. It was gratifying that in recent years the United Nations had undertaken much beneficial work in those areas. The World Programme of Action for Youth had identified priority areas for development of particular relevance to young people, and the issue of ageing had also attracted increased attention worldwide. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities had played an important role in improving the status of the disabled across the world.

40. The international community should, as a matter of urgency, move from policy-making to action so that the relevant programmes could be implemented. The gap between the developing and the developed countries was widening, and

many of the former were plagued by poverty, backwardness and shortage of funds. The majority of young people, older persons and persons with disabilities lived in developing countries, and the international community should focus its efforts on helping those countries to eradicate poverty. International cooperation should be enhanced to create conditions in developing countries for the education and employment of the young, the protection of older persons and the integration of the disabled. The Chinese Government had intensified its efforts in those areas, formulating and implementing a series of policies and regulations protecting the rights and interests of the young and promoting their participation in the nation's political, economic and social development.

41. Earlier in the meeting, a member of another delegation had mentioned a so-called Chinese youth and student movement. She hoped that he had done so out of ignorance; if so, it was regrettable. If, however, there had been an ulterior motive, her delegation strongly objected to such a groundless allegation.

42. A network of institutions for older persons had been established in China. A host of measures to protect their rights and interests and provide them with support, medical care, opportunities to offer their services to society, access to education and recreational facilities had been adopted. The Chinese Government had incorporated work for persons with disabilities in its overall development planning, and had taken practical measures to improve the situation of the disabled and to realize the goals of equality, participation and sharing.

43. Her Government would continue its work on the issues of young people, the elderly and disabled persons, take an active part in the United Nations activities in those fields and enhance its exchanges and cooperation with various countries to protect and promote the rights of those groups and facilitate their full participation in economic and social development. She hoped that the United Nations would attach greater importance to the work in those areas through strengthened international cooperation.

44. Mr. Hahm Myung CHUL (Republic of Korea) said that social development issues were complex, multidimensional and closely interlinked with economic development. Governments should not rely solely on the expectation that economic growth would improve the conditions of their people. Growth was, however, necessary for social development, particularly for the least developed countries. He urged developed and developing countries to forge a spirit of partnership so that aspirations to advance the world situation might be realized. Poverty eradication must be approached with decisive national action and international cooperation. His Government looked forward to implementing the Secretary-General's proposals for activities championing the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth was necessary in order to tap the potential of young people and encourage youth participation at all levels of development. His Government placed particular emphasis on international youth exchanges.

45. Although the Republic of Korea was still a relatively young society, the extension of life expectancy and low birth rates would lead to an increasingly ageing population. Recognizing the importance of enabling all people to participate actively in society throughout their lives, his Government had

developed measures such as employer incentives to encourage the hiring of older persons. Relevant regulations were under review with a view to enhancing their health and medical benefits. The upcoming International Year of Older Persons would provide a valuable opportunity to review the situation and to encourage the formulation of global policies and programmes.

46. Following the adoption of the Standard Rules, his Government aimed to establish more progressive policies for persons with disabilities, including an investment plan to promote employment.

47. In a rapidly changing world, the strengthened unity of the family was more important than ever. The concept of family was changing, reflecting dramatic shifts in economic structure and an evolving system of values. The family, nonetheless, remained the core unit of society, indispensable in providing support and educating children. In order to strengthen the family, societies must focus on the needs of women and children. Genuine social development could only be achieved through gender equality and the promotion of children's rights.

48. The continued political will at the national and international levels to invest in people and their well-being was of prime importance. All actors, in the private and public sectors as well as national and international bodies, should strive to transform words into reality.

49. Mr. KHRYSKOV (Russian Federation) commended the efforts of Member States in recent years to define the place and role of the United Nations in finding concrete solutions to existing social problems and in meeting the challenges of social development both in the near future and in the long term. His delegation supported the strengthening of the role and effectiveness of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to enable them to carry out the tasks entrusted to them in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Many countries faced acute social problems and it was therefore vital that the documents which emerged during the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit should reflect the widest possible understanding of those problems and propose practical solutions upon which all countries could draw when reforming their own social policy. The needs and interests of every State should be taken into account, including those of countries with economies in transition.

50. He welcomed, in that regard, the proposal contained in the agreed conclusions on coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication, adopted by the Economic and Social Council (A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III), that the United Nations system should provide technical assistance for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The Commission for Social Development must put forward practical measures for implementing the recommendations of the Copenhagen Summit and enhancing system-wide coordination. The specialized agencies also had an important part to play. Cooperation at the regional level was crucial, and his delegation wished to propose the holding of regional conferences on social development with a strong emphasis on the realization of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

51. In the Russian Federation, economic reform had brought with it complex social problems, although the country now appeared to have turned a corner with

economic growth of approximately 2 per cent being forecast for the following year. His Government was currently seeking to create legal safeguards which would render the economic and social reforms irreversible. With regard to the Copenhagen Summit, a national committee had been formed to implement the Declaration and Programme of Action.

52. The stability of the world economy would depend to some extent on the success of the unprecedented transition in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe from centralized, planned economies to the market system. While the Governments of those countries recognized that they bore the primary responsibility, the international community must lend its support and, within the United Nations system, due regard should be given to the social problems that they faced.

53. Mr. AL-NASR (Qatar) said that since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/85 and the celebration of International Youth Year in 1985, issues involving youth had figured prominently in the international years designated by the General Assembly, and in international conferences. The General Assembly, in its guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth, recommended that States should elaborate national youth-related policies and programmes and establish the governmental and non-governmental infrastructure necessary to implement them.

54. Qatar had been one of the first countries to undertake its responsibilities with regard to youth, particularly in the field of sport. It had established a National Olympic Council, a National Sports Union and a General Committee for Youth and Sport. Youth-related services and activities enjoyed special attention. The General Committee for Youth and Sport had taken a number of important initiatives. Among its successes were the establishment of a Centre for Sports Medicine, the Qatari Youth Week held in Madrid, and a great increase in the number of sports centres and teams. Concern for youth extended to the educational and technological fields, and in order to keep abreast of new developments, the Qatari Educational Club and the Youth Centre for Technology had been established and enjoyed full support from the State. Wide-ranging future plans included the establishment of additional youth and sports facilities, the building of Olympic swimming pools, participation in regional and international sporting events and the preparation of a framework for youth-related concerns.

55. Youth was a valuable resource which must be developed and harnessed by the State. Young people played a leading role in Qatar, and their energy and ability were an important factor in implementing ambitious development programmes. It was recognized that young people had responsibilities and duties, and could make an effective contribution to society.

56. Mrs. LIMJUCO (Philippines) said that the recent major United Nations conferences on social issues had made it clear that human development had two dimensions: economic growth and social reform. The existence of one without the other was neither possible nor acceptable. Her Government had adopted a social reform agenda aimed at promoting economic recovery while addressing the issue of social equity by targeting the most needy groups.

57. In a poor country, the aim of development programmes should be to extend people's capabilities to enable them to meet their minimum basic needs. The report of the Secretary-General on cooperatives (A/51/267) recognized cooperative enterprise as a means by which the poorest people could gain a stake in the economy. Cooperatives allowed individuals to combine their resources, thus giving them greater economic weight. In the Philippines, the Punla Development Trust, a joint government and private-sector initiative, had been set up to build the capacities of institutions which provided credit for and promoted enterprise among the nation's poorest citizens. Her Government was committed to a "bottom-up", rather than a "trickle-down" strategy of eradicating poverty.

58. Young people represented a large proportion of the population of the Philippines. Youth issues, accordingly, were of great concern to her Government, which in March 1996 had welcomed the global launching in Manila of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The Manila Declaration emanating from the Global Indigenous and Youth Cultural Olympics/Summit for Peace and Sustainable Development (A/51/293) contained proposals for implementing the Programme of Action. In the Philippines, a National Youth Commission had been created to formulate policy on youth and to coordinate related activities.

59. She welcomed the forming of a support group to coordinate the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons. She was encouraged by the progress made in developing a disability index based on the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which were the subject of General Assembly resolution 50/144, introduced by the Philippines. Her delegation was ready to undertake further initiatives on disability and other social issues in coordination with other States and relevant non-governmental organizations.

60. Mr. RI Song Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the world social situation continued to deteriorate despite the efforts of the United Nations. Even as the world stood at the threshold of the twenty-first century, social evils such as poverty, organized crime and drug abuse were still rife, while the gap between the developed and developing nations continued to widen. Full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action was a vital step towards resolving those problems. Every Member State must draw up a people-centred social development policy. The organs of the United Nations system, particularly the international financial institutions, should enhance their role in that field, according special attention to the needs of developing countries. The cessation of armed conflicts and the lifting of sanctions, whether imposed by the United Nations or by individual countries, were important for achieving social development.

61. Disability issues were of special concern to his Government. He urged all Member States to adopt effective policies to enable disabled persons to participate fully in all areas of life. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, disabled persons enjoyed equal rights and opportunities, often receiving preferential treatment.

62. It was his hope that the commitments made on social development at the recent major United Nations conferences would be speedily implemented and that the developed countries would offer the financial support necessary to achieve that goal.

63. Mr. TESSEMA (Ethiopia) said that the United Nations had been committed to promoting higher standards of living and finding solutions to social and economic problems since its inception. At the Copenhagen Summit, the family of nations had met to agree on joint action to eradicate poverty, expand productiv employment and enhance social integration. In its resolution 50/161, the General Assembly, endorsing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, had recognized the critical importance of international cooperation to complement national action to achieve those goals. The commitments made at Copenhagen had been a source of great hope and optimism, in particular for developing countries.

64. In 1991, Ethiopia had emerged from 17 years of brutal dictatorship. His Government was endeavouring to rebuild the country's economy and infrastructure Despite years of famine and drought, Ethiopia had now reached the level of food self-sufficiency. The economic growth rate had risen to 7.7 per cent after a prolonged period of stagnation, while inflation stood at under 1 per cent. The eradication of poverty was a priority. The proportion of the national budget allocated to the social sector had increased dramatically since 1991. Measures on education, health care, population control and women's and youth issues were being implemented from the grass roots up. He urged the Governments of all developing countries to place greater emphasis on social services and to ensure that funding was directed towards the very poorest groups.

65. The eradication of poverty should be pursued with equal vigour by both developing and developed countries, for the consequences of poverty - drugs, diseases, pollution, migration, terrorism and political instability - respected no borders. However, the burden of external debt continued to hamper the development of many poor countries, with some of them spending over 30 per cent of precious foreign exchange earnings on debt servicing. Poverty could not be eradicated through anti-poverty programmes and declarations alone. New and additional resources, efforts and actions were urgently needed both at the national and international levels in order to ensure sustainable development fo all.

66. Ms. THAMIM (Pakistan) said that the state of the global economy had a direct bearing on social development. She was therefore heartened to note that according to the World Economic and Social Survey of 1996, the rate of growth o the world economy was accelerating, though it must become more sustainable. In developing countries, however, the growth of per capita gross domestic product had been small, and in most regions remained in real terms below that in 1980. At the same time, the flow of official development assistance from the donor countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had declined to well below the agreed target. Against that background, the United Nations must find ways to alleviate the burden on poor countries of servicing their foreign debt.

67. Hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, social exclusion and drug abuse afflicted many of the world's young people. It was therefore imperative that Governments, together with the United Nations system and all the actors of civil society, should strive to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth. The capacity of the Youth Unit must be strengthened to enable it to carry out the Programme of Action.

68. The proportion of older persons in the world's population was increasing. The preparations for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 must be supplemented by result-oriented programmes structured around the conceptual framework prepared by the Secretary-General (A/50/114). Developing countries in particular must pay special attention to the needs of their older citizens in terms of nutrition, health care, social security and family support. Disabled persons were one of the most neglected groups in United Nations programmes. Governments should therefore support the efforts of the Special Rapporteur on Disability and contribute generously to the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability.

69. She welcomed the Secretary-General's report on cooperatives (A/51/267). The contents should be widely disseminated in the developing countries with a view to raising awareness of the enormous potential of cooperatives to facilitate realization of the goals of the World Summit for Social Development.

70. Her Government had launched a comprehensive social action programme aimed at eradicating poverty, redressing gender inequalities, promoting rural development and protecting the environment. Economic reform and the Government's privatization policy had enhanced funding for social development. Special programmes had been established to aid the most vulnerable groups in society, including women, children, widows, orphans and the elderly. In addition, greater attention was being accorded to the rights of women, children, ethnic and religious minorities and those living in poverty.

71. Mr. AG OUMAR (Mali) said that he would highlight the measures taken by his Government to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. With the Government's support, many associations of disabled persons had been formed and were now working in close cooperation with the Fédération malienne des associations de personnes handicappées. A national seminar would shortly be held on community-based rehabilitation. Already, one programme geared to community-based rehabilitation in the urban environment was under way in Bamako. A national survey had been carried out to evaluate the needs of young people with disabilities in terms of mobility aids and production had already begun. Among other initiatives, a programme on employment for the disabled was being broadcast on national radio and television and a manual on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons would shortly be published.

72. There was a need to rationalize the efforts of the various groups working on behalf of disabled persons and, to that end, his Government was organizing a management training workshop for the leaders of associations for disabled persons. The first national sports championships for the disabled would take place shortly. His Government was ready to initiate projects to generate income for disabled persons, thereby ending the problem of begging.

73. Mrs. HEPTULLAH (India) said that the main priority of social development in India was to tackle the problems of poverty and inequality. Efforts were being made to combine the imperatives of economic growth with those of social justice through State-sponsored social development, poverty-eradication strategies, affirmative action to redress inequalities and promote social justice, and a close relationship between the Government and non-governmental organizations. The scale of that undertaking in the context of underdevelopment, population pressure, competition for scarce resources and major social and economic transformations could not be underestimated. A key feature was the interplay between democracy, growth, empowerment and social justice, with a strategy centred on affirmative action to benefit the largest categories of the socially disadvantaged, by breaking down invisible barriers to political participation at all levels.

74. The family unit in India was very strong and provided the social security net for vulnerable family members; however, the traditional extended or joint family was increasingly being eroded because of the strains of modern life. Three aspects were especially relevant: to adapt the institution of the family to modern times while preserving the stabilizing functions of the traditional family; to emancipate women from traditionally defined roles to enable them to participate as equal partners in public life; and to control population growth, which was related both to gender justice and to the imperatives of economic development. India had been implementing active holistic family-welfare strategies over several decades based on the linkages between education, economic and social development, and population control.

75. The welfare of youth was closely linked to political stability, economic growth, and educational and employment opportunities; the future of society depended on harnessing their energies. The chief priorities were employment generation and universalization of elementary education along with reducing disparities in education between rural and urban areas and ensuring education for disadvantaged groups, notably the girl child. With regard to the question of ageing, her delegation associated itself with the comments made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

76. Four national institutes in four different areas of disability, namely visual, orthopaedic, speech and hearing, and mental handicaps, had been set up to provide education, training, counselling and rehabilitation. Major programmes to reduce disabilities had been adopted and technologies for disabled persons were being developed.

77. The Secretary-General's report on the cooperatives (A/51/267) contained valuable observations with regard to the efficacy of cooperatives in promoting social development.

78. The solution of the various problems of social development required both political commitment and substantial funds, national and international. It also required time. Adequate programmes for special categories could best be addressed only in the context of a general development effort for which an enabling international environment was essential. It was ironic that, despite the explicit recognition at the World Summit for Social Development that problems of underdevelopment required international cooperation, the utility of

international development cooperation was being questioned, development assistance had stagnated or declined, and more and more stringent conditionalities were being imposed under social clauses. There was a disturbing tendency to impose uniform standards of social development worldwide regardless of the stage of development of different parts of the world. International cooperation remained essential to facilitate and accelerate social and economic development.

79. Mr. SERIWA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation supported the statement on the question of ageing made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Despite the encouraging growth in the global economy, economic and social conditions in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, were still disturbing, owing to a large number of external factors such as an increased debt-burden. Such factors adversely affected social development. The goals set out in the Copenhagen Declaration could not be achieved in the absence of a supportive international economic climate. Donor countries and international financial institutions should give priority in all their development programmes to the development of human resources, through support for technical, educational and training programmes, and by improving health and social services. The human person was both the tool and the goal of development.

80. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had always tried to make the best use of its human resources and to improve economic and social conditions, while balancing the needs of the individual and society and promoting human rights. Ambitious development plans had given priority to education and training programmes, health, housing and social services. However, those plans had suffered a reverse in recent years due to the unjust sanctions regime imposed on the country, that had caused the Libyan Arab people grievous losses. The negative effects extended to all economic, social and humanitarian spheres. They had particularly affected the most vulnerable sectors of society, especially in regard to health and nutrition. His delegation hoped that the United Nations would take the necessary steps to end the sanctions.

81. Special attention was paid to disabled people in his country. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had presided over the Advisory Committee of the International Year for Disabled Persons in 1981, and had passed legislation guaranteeing the rights of disabled persons. A national council for disabled persons had been established in order to raise awareness of disability and integrate disabled persons into society. There were also numerous special facilities in many towns and villages.

82. The international community must continue its efforts to integrate disabled persons fully into society by means of the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, and that special attention should be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable members of that sector, such as older persons, women and children.

83. The tenth anniversary of International Youth Year had provided an opportunity to concentrate on youth-related issues and to guarantee the right of young people to education, work, health care and full participation in development, in view of their fundamental role in that regard.

84. It was encouraging that resolutions were being adopted to facilitate equitable economic development, but the international community had to take urgent and effective steps to end the discriminatory policies and harsh economic measures imposed by some developed States unilaterally against certain developing countries as a means of imposing their wishes by force. A certain powerful State had recently passed legislation penalizing foreign companies involved in the oil and gas business in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in an attempt to impose its laws on other States, in violation of their sovereignty and of international law.

85. Mr. MINOVES-TRIQUELL (Andorra) said that youth issues were of major concern to his Government. He recalled that at the World Summit for Social Development, heads of State and Government had made a commitment to encourage the contribution of people of all age groups and foster dialogue between generations. His delegation believed that the problems facing the world's youth could best be addressed through an intergenerational approach. The World Programme of Action for Youth set out the priorities for action on youth issues. The international community must work together with the United Nations to ensure that the good intentions underlying that document were translated into positive outcomes. The forthcoming World Youth Forum to be held in Vienna would be particularly important in that regard.

86. He wished to highlight two areas of critical concern, namely access to work and human rights education. Unemployment was one of the most acute problems facing young people today. The huge growth of the labour force, in developing countries, would require massive job-creation initiatives. He was firmly convinced that human rights education should begin as early as possible, for young minds were especially susceptible to ideologies and fanaticism. It was imperative that young people should learn respect for human rights and tolerance, since the values inculcated in today's youth would define the shape of the world tomorrow. He called on UNESCO and on voluntary groups to expand their work in that area.

87. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the World Summit for Social Development had demonstrated the concern of the international community in a changing world in which an unprecedented number of people suffered deprivation. The Syrian people were well aware of their responsibilities and of the role their country had to play. They were equally aware of the contribution which should be made by the industrialized countries to halting economic and social decline.

88. Despite being forced to devote a large part of its human and material resources to defending its land and people against the expansionist policies of Israel, the Syrian Arab Republic had undertaken a comprehensive and successful social development programme. The leadership provided by the President had ensured the political stability and democratic climate necessary for broad participation in youth-related activities. A number of non-governmental organizations enabled young people and students to protect their interests and rights and to carry out social, political, cultural, sporting and technical activities. Syria's strategy with regard to youth was based on their needs in modern society. Youth programmes guaranteed to young people a number of rights, including the right to education, work, participation in national decision-

making, relocation for purposes of study or work, and self-expression. His country had welcomed the World Programme of Action for Youth.

89. Older persons were treated with the greatest respect in Syria, and a National Council for the health care of older persons had elaborated a draft national plan to guarantee all their needs. His country would contribute to the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (1999). Syrian society was unanimous in its view that the family was the basis of society and that family values and institutions should be strengthened. Special attention was also given to disabled persons, and special provisions had been made to facilitate their access to training and employment. Further measures were being taken in accordance with the Standard Rules annexed to General Assembly resolution 48/96. Special attention was also given to alleviating the problems faced by children, refugees, orphans and other groups living in difficult circumstances. However, increased resources were necessary in order to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

90. His country urged the international community to abide by the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development, particularly in regard to the provision by highly developed countries of the support necessary to developing countries, most importantly in the fields of finance and technology, with a view to making the world more democratic, humanitarian, secure and stable.

91. Mrs. AL-AWADHI (Kuwait) said that, under the Constitution, disabled persons were treated with especial concern in her country. In common with those with other special needs, disabled persons were provided by the State with a full range of social services and financial support. Recent legislation on the care of disabled persons represented an important achievement in that it guaranteed their rights in every sphere. For example, the State guaranteed to disabled persons appropriate housing, whatever their circumstances. The number of special training centres was being increased, and disabled persons were guaranteed special maternity rights. Special pension provisions had been made for them, and they were exempt from many taxes. Higher child benefits were provided for children born with disabilities. Government agencies followed international specifications in providing access to public facilities and transportation for disabled persons. Kuwaiti businesses employing more than 50 persons were obliged to employ suitably qualified disabled persons, to make up at least 2 per cent of their workforce.

92. The Government was endeavouring to alleviate the effects of the Iraqi occupation on disabled persons, many of whom had suffered inhuman treatment. Moreover, that occupation had greatly increased their numbers. Provision was being made to minimize the resulting social and psychological effects and to fully integrate those who had suffered into society. Kuwait was guided by the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

93. Mr. HABONIMANA (Burundi) said that the crisis which had engulfed Burundi for the past three years had gravely undermined government efforts to assist youth, the elderly, the disabled and the family. The economic embargo unjustly imposed against Burundi by neighbouring countries had devastated an entire

people and had seriously jeopardized ongoing programmes of health, education and training, rehabilitation of the disabled, assistance to the elderly, job creation and family planning. The sanctions had been taken in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, the Charters of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity and regional and subregional economic and trade agreements.

94. The economic embargo was reinforcing the rebellion and thereby contributing to the acts of vandalism, massacre of innocent people and destruction of the social and economic infrastructure. Armed groups and militia were intensifying their attacks, directed mainly against the most vulnerable persons in the population. The embargo was particularly devastating for a poor country almost entirely dependent on agriculture. Children, women and the elderly, who constituted 80 per cent of the affected population, were the first to suffer. Epidemic diseases had taken an enormous toll, both in Burundi and in the neighbouring countries which were imposing the embargo; that situation was aggravated by famine and malnutrition. A large proportion of young people had been forced to abandon their education, leading to illiteracy, prostitution, and crime.

95. His delegation therefore urgently appealed to the international community, and particularly to the United Nations, to put pressure on Burundi's neighbours to lift the embargo immediately. The international community must mobilize to assist the people of Burundi.

96. Mr. AL-HITTI (Iraq) said that, since the end of the cold war, increased attention had been paid to economic and social development, particularly in the developing world. The issue was of concern to the whole world, since development was the fruit of security, and the cycle of security and increased development benefited all States, replacing the cycle of poverty, hunger and backwardness.

97. International economic relations were, however, at a critical stage, owing to the unbalanced economic growth of recent decades and the growing disparity between North and South. The situation with regard to human development was equally grave, since illiteracy, poverty, hunger, disease and discrimination were widespread in many countries and hampered development. Some bilateral and multilateral practices also hampered development, and must be reviewed. Specifically, some United Nations bodies played a negative role in certain developing countries. The Security Council and certain Member States imposed sanctions, with disastrous consequences on the peoples and countries concerned. The Secretary-General himself, in his Supplement to an Agenda for Peace (A/50/60-S/1995/1, para. 70), had noted that sanctions could conflict with the development objectives of the Organization and do long-term damage to the productive capacity of the target country, in addition to having a severe effect on other countries that were neighbours or major economic partners of the target country.

98. The Charter gave no guidance with regard to the imposition of sanctions, their extent, effect on development and human rights in the target country, nor as to how and when the sanctions should be lifted. That had permitted certain members of the Security Council to change the use of sanctions from an

instrument for settling international disputes to one for punishing and imposing starvation on peoples.

99. An urgent review of the sanctions imposed on Iraq was necessary, since they had brought into question the credibility and morality of the United Nations. Certain Council members were using the sanctions to impose their own political agenda, unconnected with the purposes of the United Nations. Many reports issued by the United Nations and other humanitarian bodies gave details of the destructive effects of the sanctions on development in general, and individuals in particular. The negative impact of sanctions greatly exceeded the expected gains. For example, statistics showed that the number of those who had died in Iraq as a direct result of the imposition of sanctions was five times greater than the number killed by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. In June 1996 alone nearly 4,500 children under five years old had died, as compared with some 600 in the whole of 1989. The number of children over the age of five who had died in the same month had been nearly 6,500, as compared with some 1,700 in the whole of 1989. Thus, the sanctions constituted a form of genocide carried out against the Iraqi people.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.